

# Yale University

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October 30, 1991

Dr. Bernadine Healy  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, MD 20892


Dear Dr. Healy:


We write regarding an important aspect of NIH's policy concerning the training of scientists who are young women. We feel that one aspect of this policy is incomplete and can inhibit women from pursuing careers as scientists.

Currently, anyone who is awarded an NIH postdoctoral fellowship must serve full-time, for one, two or three consecutive years, as the case may be. Aside from maternity leave (which, presumably, would cover the period involving the birth of a child) there is no allowance made for part-time service (and consequent extensions of the time of the award). Accordingly, a woman for whom full-time day care is not an option and who wishes to work part-time while rearing an infant, cannot do so while holding an NIH post-doctoral fellowship. This policy is unnecessarily restrictive and works against our national goal of training more young women as scientists. Furthermore, it stands in contrast to the corresponding policies at many of our home institutions to such an extent that a woman being paid as a post-doctoral associate in our laboratories can work part-time, but a woman in the same laboratory who is a holder of an NIH post-doctoral fellowship, cannot. It is also our general experience that women who work part-time under the circumstances described above often achieve almost as much as men or women who work full-time: they are simply better organized and more highly motivated.

We urge you to institute a re-examination of the policy addressed above. A relaxation of the current guidelines to allow women to work two-thirds or three-quarters time while child-rearing (perhaps to be considered as a kind of maternity leave under a broadened definition) would benefit the whole nation.

Sincerely,

  
Maxine Singer, Director  
Carnegie Institution

  
Sidney Altman  
Sterling Professor of Biology

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The following individuals are signatories in absentia. Notes of assent are available for inspection.

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